

A BRIGHT LIGHT FADED AWAY



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First edition

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To my sister, Samjhana Kandel, I dedicate this memory.

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Preface

Based on a true story.

A Bright Light Faded Away

A *bright light...*
At six in the evening, I arrived home from college. My mom and sister's faces were twinkling with lovely smiles. I stood there, completely awe-struck.

"We brought something special today! Can you guess?" my sister asked, her eyes blazing with excitement, grinning from ear to ear.

I thought for a moment. They were both sitting on the balcony, clearly hiding something behind the chairs.

"Is it a dog?" I asked, genuinely flummoxed.

"Absolutely," she beamed. "A tiny puppy."

And then she showed me. A little brown male puppy, so absurdly cute it almost hurt to look at him. Hauntingly beautiful, honestly. His eyes were glimmering. Such a lovely thing. His small feet and paws were perfectly decent, and his ears, nose, and snout were impossibly petite. I was thunderstruck. Here was this local breed puppy, and he stole my heart at first glance.

He sat peacefully on the balcony, watching our faces shyly. Didn't move, didn't try to run. Just scanned our eyes, letting himself be welcomed. In just a few days, he'd become our newest family member.

"How'd you get him?" I asked my sister, softly caressing his head.

“Mom and I were at the *bazaar*. On our way home after buying vegetables, this little guy just came out of a house gate on the side of the street. Started following us. So I picked him up and carried him all the way home in my arms. And that’s how he ended up here.”

“Wow, amazing. He’s fated to be with us. How old is he?”

“About a month old. Not more than that.”

That evening we fed him milk and rice. Found a cardboard box and placed him inside. It was his tiny temporary home on the balcony, just outside the main door. He didn’t bark, didn’t skitter around. Just gazed at us, tail wagging gently.

* * *

The next day, he got eggs, lentils, and rice. Devoured it voraciously. Started exploring the staircase, running around the garden. He loved chasing flies, biting shoes, tearing socks apart. *And with every passing moment, he grew excitingly close to us.*

Within days, he was fully ours. He recognized us as his family. At night, he slept near the main door. And every morning, he’d wait there until we opened it. He did his business of dumping in the garden. Sometimes on the floor, which became his one bad habit. We tried our best to train him to go outside the gate. In the beginning, he was shy and gentle, but soon enough, his naughty, mischievous side emerged. Causing troubles and stirring up agitation.

But oh, those mornings. The door would open, and there he’d be, greeting us happily, barking, licking our feet with that warm little tongue. I’d take him on his leash outside the gate for his morning dump. Then we’d play all day. He’d softly nibble my arms and legs, his way of playing. Lick my ears and face. Chase me everywhere. Sneak into the kitchen for garbage. Curl up on my mom’s and sister’s laps. He’d pull at my clothes with his teeth, and I’d swat him away. He’d do it again, and sometimes I’d hurt him more than I should have. He was bad, obstinate and reckless. But also cool, awesome, and deeply loved.

Here’s the thing about him: **even when we hurt him, he forgot within**

minutes. Came right back to play. We hit him countless times, which I'm not proud of, and he forgave us every single time. No ego. Never hurt us back. Sure, he wreaked havoc, but everyone loved him anyway. He was adoringly cute. My sister, especially, was surpassingly fond of him. She took such great care of him. She bathed him, fed him, walked him, even bought him a new kennel. But he wouldn't sleep in it. Preferred the temporary mat we'd made from old clothes and a sack, placed at the entrance of the main door. *He loved sleeping close to us.* Feared the dark and loneliness. Craved our presence, always wanted caresses on his head and pats on his stomach. I loved patting his stomach especially.

My sister named him *Kantey*—Sanskrit word for dog.

* * *

Kantey was clever as hell. When he did something bad and made us angry, he'd go silent and try to cheer us up. His worst habit? Gnawing everything. Shoes, wood, plastic and the list went on. Sometimes he'd jump from the balcony while still leashed, hanging there, choking. We'd rush to save him just in time.

At dawn, when the first ray of sun hit the earth and we were still sleeping, he'd push at the locked main door with his paws, barking to go out for a morning dump. Occasionally, he'd just go where he slept. Right in his own little bed.

Bathing him was easy. Keeping him leashed? Unacceptable. He'd break free constantly, always succeeding in sneaking into the kitchen and bedroom, his favorite places. In the morning, while my sister slept, he'd come running in, jump on the bed, and start licking and pulling at her hair with his teeth. He loved her intensely. He'd cry with pain watching her leave through the gate, wanting desperately to follow wherever she went. And when she came home, he'd come running straight to her.

He craved attention, love, and care. If you ate something without sharing, he'd go mad. You had to share. Or play with him. Get close. Pat his head. Caress his ears. Play with his fur. Carry him in your arms. Let him sleep on your lap. Unleash him. Do these things, and he will be all yours. He'd even bite you lovingly. His

excited eyes spoke silent words. Engage with him, love him, feed him. And he'd remember your love forever. His eyes followed you everywhere. His barks simply asked for your presence. His gleeful wags always invited you in.

* * *

The neighborhood adored him too. Children flocked to his cuteness and charm. He'd approach big dogs, wanting friendship. They'd run away, and he'd chase them like they were long-lost buddies. One neighborhood dog actually took a liking to him. Brought him home, shared food, strolled with him and always came to the gate to receive him. They were best friends, roaming the neighborhood together. That dog even protected him from ravenous strays.

Leftover meat and bones mixed with rice and pulses were his favorite. Boiled corn, *puri*, chocolates, bitten rice, *dalmoth*...he loved it all. Tenants in our house gave him biscuits and treats. They adored him too, letting him enter their rooms freely. I'd have to retrieve him and bring him back where he belonged.

His favorite place remained the balcony, sleeping on that sack mat. He'd climb the railings, watching everything. Whenever we left home, he would climb up and watch us go through the gate, often crying even when we were gone for only a few minutes. He'd bark insanely. And when we returned, his excitement and exuberance would soar. He'd come running, landing his front paws on our thighs, tail wagging furiously, barking with pure joy, licking our hands and feet. *Every departure brought agony. Every return brought squealing delight.*

* * *

He played with such vigor. My elder brother loved playing with him too. It was never boring. Even if we sat quietly, he'd provoke us into his games. Climb on chairs, watch us through windows, bark to summon us. I played with him until we both collapsed from exhaustion. Up and down the staircase was his routine. Whenever I moved faster, he'd jump at me, ready for fun. All pain, boredom, loneliness melted away near him. *His eyes seemed to say, "Hey, no*

time for stress. This is the moment. Let's have fun. Enjoy this game."

My mom loved him too. Let him sit on her lap. Fed him eggs and rice. Played and walked with him. We were all immensely attached. *In his mind, we were his closest family. His everything.*

He grew rapidly. By three months, he was stronger, bulkier, taller and shrewder. *One of the family's hearts.* Sometimes he caused so much trouble, made so much noise, I felt like abandoning him, throwing him out. Felt like he was just a burden. Thought about getting rid of him.

Then I'd play with him again, and those thoughts would completely detonate.

* * *

My sister held him constantly, loved him dearly. Walked him in the evenings. Chatted with him, called him beloved names. Kissed his forehead. Always carried him in her arms, fondling, cuddling, gently caressing, whispering lovely words. He may not have understood the language, but surely felt the expression and love showered upon him. She bought him a small spiny plastic ball. He was repulsed by it. He just wanted to play with us. Every single day, we played. It excited us, heightened our joy. We lived those enthralling days fully.

We'd bought a new kennel for him, but he refused to stay there. Finally we let him sleep in his favorite spot. At the entrance of the main door. *His heaven. Closest to us.*

Sometimes during daytime naps, he seemed to dream. His body convulsed swiftly, like small seizures. Then he'd wake in our presence, relieved.

He learned manners and rules eventually. Stopped breaking them. With time, he became mature and obedient. Flourished more adoringly, more strongly. He was brave. He'd jump down staircases, run swiftly. He was always full of energy and high spirits. We dressed him in old T-shirts against the cold. By morning, he'd always somehow removed them. He'd cry when he needed to go out.

We took countless photos. My sister took videos. I filmed him playing with her, with Mom. Recorded those memories.

But the ones saved in the brain won't fade. Everything feels like yesterday. Still vivid, fresh and animated.

* * *

Faded Away.

One evening, we gave him egg and rice. He didn't eat. By night, the meal sat untouched. For the first time ever, he showed no interest in food. He looked sad. Miserable.

Next morning, the meal remained. Not a single bite taken. We gave him water. He drank slowly, then vomited instantly. He seemed to have caught a cold. His sleeping mat was covered in puke.

For lunch, we replaced it with hot lentils and rice. He ate reluctantly, then suddenly vomited everything. He stopped barking that day. Stopped playing. Couldn't keep down water, let alone food. His favorite food—meat, egg, boiled corn, meant nothing now. He tried to eat painfully, but vomited every time. We had no clue what was happening. Assumed a bad cold. Brought anti-flu medicine, administered it orally. He vomited that too. Every attempt was utterly futile.

Three days passed. He ate nothing. Drank nothing. Ceased barking and playing. Stopped coming inside. Stopped waking my sister in the morning. Stopped wagging his tail entirely.

I tried playing with him. Zero interest.

We didn't know what he was going through. Had no idea about the pain he silently endured. He grew weak, walked clumsily when he needed to go out. Hardly took a dump then. He seemed to be slowly dissolving into his pain and despair.

* * *

On the fourth morning, he went outside the gate to take a dump. I followed. What came out of him wasn't undigested food. It was blood. Several huge

worms. Thick blood pouring from his stomach. Inflamed and necrosed intestinal tissues. Blood and horrifying large roundworms, all there.

I was petrified with terror. Flabbergasted.

I ran to tell my sister, and showed her the place. She was totally shocked. We decided instantly: Kantey needed the vet, as soon as possible.

We took him by car to the vet hospital at Chabahil. His condition worsened during the ride. Carrying him, I could feel the immense spasms in his stomach. He'd been suffering terribly all along. He defecated blood again in the car. Luckily, the driver didn't notice. At the hospital, he vomited again.

Long queue. Many dogs were being treated. The charges were too expensive. After waiting in vain, we decided to try the Governmental Vet Hospital at Tripureshwor.

Another taxi. Another wait for tickets. After an hour, we finally saw the doctor.

We described the symptoms. His reply: *Parvo virus*. The virus had profusely destroyed his intestine and stomach linings. Nothing he ate or drank could be absorbed. Plus, worm infestation. He prescribed anti-helminthic drugs and rebuked us for not vaccinating Kantey early. We hadn't. We regretted it deeply that day.

"Your dog is a local breed," the doctor said. "If he were a hybrid, he'd have died within two days. Your dog is quite strong. Bring him here daily for five days. He may survive, but we can't guarantee anything."

His words gave us great hope. They administered normal saline intravenously. Kantey was quiet and still. He only flinched when the needle pierced his vein. After that, he was exquisitely calm.

He was being hydrated. We hoped to see him recover fully. In that hospital, we saw many injured and diseased dogs. Another Parvo case, too.

We brought him home that evening. He looked somewhat better. Made his kennel warm with extra clothes. My sister and I mixed the anti-helminthic drugs with water. He didn't want it. He just wanted to lie in the shade. We force-fed him orally. After a while, he vomited.

The doctor had said no food or water. So we just placed him in his kennel and looked at him silently. He looked back blankly.

Maybe he wanted to say something. Maybe he wanted us to stay with him. Didn't want to be alone. Wanted to be embraced in our arms. Wanted to play more.

That evening was the last time I saw his eyes open. Scanning us with inexplicable words. The last time I saw him breathing. The last time the rays in his eyes slowly faded away.

* * *

The next morning, I woke up and went upstairs to check on him. He was in a deep sleep. I opened the kennel gate, touched him to wake him.

He was cold. Rigid. Lifeless.

I prod at him. No reaction. His eyes were open but frozen, blank. The expression was gone. Breathing had stopped. Pulses had completely ceased.

After four days battling the virus, he'd succumbed. Dropped into eternal slumber. Never to wake and play again. Never to greet us in the morning. Never to wake my sister. Never to enjoy his favorite foods. He just faded away in silence. Stopped waiting for our arrivals when we went out.

I told my sister the heartbreaking news. She woke instantly, ran to see him. Came back crying, weeping bitterly. Sobbing with her whole heart.

My heart shattered completely. I tried holding back tears, but they welled up against my eyes and slid down my cheeks. I sobbed silently that day. Tears jerking out constantly.

Mom saw him too. Burst into tears. Scolded my sister for not treating him sooner.

The tears were one thing. But the immense, infinite crater of pain carved into our hearts will never fade. In memories, in some corner of our hearts, it remains fresh and alive. As if everything happened just yesterday.

My brother grieved too. *In the evenings, we'd look at the balcony, thinking he was still there, waiting to play. Though he was no more. That strong, energetic dog dissolved into the sea of death.*

A bright light faded away.

A BRIGHT LIGHT FADED AWAY

* * *

We put his body in a sack. Buried him with his food bowl, sleeping mat, clothes, leash, and ball. And with him, we buried our joy. We buried our hearts.

THE END

